

CORRESPONDENCE

STATEMENT OF AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY ON CIGARETTE SMOKING AND LUNG CANCER

To the Editor:—The following statement was approved by the board of directors of the American Cancer Society on Jan. 21, 1960.

"In 1959 the death rate from lung cancer among men in the United States was over 10 times as high as it was in 1930. The disease is now one of the most common and most lethal of all forms of human cancer. This tremendous increase in number of deaths and the reported association of cigarette smoking with lung cancer has led the American Cancer Society to pursue an aggressive program of research on lung cancer and to disseminate new evidence bearing on the subject to the medical profession and to the public.

"In October, 1954, the board of directors of the American Cancer Society declared that 'the presently available evidence indicates an association between smoking and lung cancer.' In November, 1957, the board reviewed the report of the study group on smoking and health and agreed with its conclusions that 'the evidence of a cause-effect relationship is adequate for considering the initiation of public health measures.'

"The board now believes that it has a further responsibility both to the medical profession and to the general public to state that in its judgement the clinical, epidemiologic, experimental, chemical, and pathological evidence presented by the many studies reported in recent years indicates beyond reasonable doubt that cigarette smoking is the major cause of the unprecedented increase in lung cancer. The board further believes that all organizations and agencies concerned with cancer have a responsibility to formulate programs of action based on this information in order to reduce the incidence of this largely preventable disease.

"The strong association between cigarette smoking and lung cancer has been established by an extraordinarily large amount of evidence. Twenty-eight studies have indicated that a history of smoking is more common among lung cancer patients than among those without the disease. Three follow-up studies of smokers and nonsmokers have demonstrated that the death rate from lung cancer among cigarette smokers is about 10 times as great as among nonsmokers. Epidemiologic studies indicate also that cigarette smoking is associated with about 75% of all cases of lung cancer. The incidence

of the disease increases with the amount of cigarette smoking, and no threshold below which lung cancer will not occur has been identified.

"The fact that the association is one of cause and effect is well supported by several types of evidence. For example, in experiments condensates of tobacco smoke have produced cancers on the skin of mice and rabbits. After experimental exposure of mice to tobacco smoke or its condensates, abnormal cellular growths have been reported on mouse bronchial epithelium, in tissue cultures, and on the cervix. Cilia, one of the lung's major defenses against inhaled particulate matter, have been shown to be paralyzed by tobacco smoke. At least 10 chemical agents that have been identified in cigarette smoke have caused the development of cancer in laboratory animals. Studies of pathological changes in bronchial tubes of smokers have shown that abnormal cellular changes in the bronchi of the lung increase in degree and frequency as the amount of cigarette smoking increases and that in nonsmokers these changes are scarcely present at all.

"Some studies indicate that cigarette smoking is not the only causative factor in lung cancer. Certain occupational causes are recognized, and other factors such as air pollution have been implicated. The evidence indicates that the development of most cases of lung cancer is a complicated process in which cigarette smoking is the major controllable, though possibly not the only, factor. The existing evidence does not support the alternative hypotheses suggested to explain the exceptionally high degree of association of cigarette smoking with lung cancer.

"In presenting its conclusions the American Cancer Society recognizes that cigarette smoking is a personal habit and that the risk involved is at the option of the individual. The Society, nevertheless, believes that it has a responsibility to do everything possible within its established policies to reduce the alarming and rapidly increasing number of deaths from lung cancer. To that end the Society plans to continue support of research on lung cancer and to promote the widespread dissemination of information regarding causes and prevention of the disease to physicians and to the public with primary initial emphasis on teen-agers."

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